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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on an evaluation of the institutional processes and mechanisms which are in place at the State University of New York at Albany, Oneonta and Hudson Valley Community College to deal with the concerns of undergraduate students of African descent. The report provides (where applicable) an overview of each school's circumstances concerning the following areas: black faculty ratio to total faculty; black enrollment; black academic achievement; student affairs' response to black students; multicultural awareness; mentoring and outreach programs; and black student/college relations. Overall, the studies show that each campus has sought, since the late 1980s, to create a more positive institutional fit for students of African descent. Faculty and staff of color are also being designated to accomplish the institution's objectives involving black students. It is suggested that greater numbers of professionals of African descent need to be hired and retained, and greater levels of campuswide involvement are needed in order to achieve observable improvements in the intellectual life of black students. (GLR)

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INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSES TO STUDENTS OF AFRICAN DESCENT ATTENDING THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK AT ALBANY, THE COLLEGE AT ONEONTA AND HUDSON VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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State University of New York at Albany
Departments of Psychology and Africana Studies
November, 1991

A. J. Williams-Myers
Editor

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EXECUTIVE COMMENTARY

The author of this document, Dr. Marcia E. Sutherland, of the Departments of Psychology and Africana Studies of the State University of New York at Albany, was a recipient of a Summer Research Fellowship from the Institute in 1990. The results of that 1990 research were a continuation of her earlier work related to the needs of students of African descent on predominantly white college and university campuses within the State University system across New York. Dr. Sutherland's report is concise, perceptive, and timely. Although it comes at a time when the state is faced with a skyrocketing budget deficit, it carries an important message that all concerned university and college administrators, and faculty, need to hear if American society is to redress an historical educational deficit that continues to plague students of African descent.

Dr. Sutherland's report permits State University administrators and faculty to view this educational deficit that confronts American society in a microcosm. What is evident is that the three predominantly white college and university campuses she covered in her interviews (SUNY/A, Oneonta, HVCC) "have sought since the late 1980s to create a more positive institutional fit for students of African descent." But, as her findings indicate, there is room for much improvement.

If the State University of New York is to continue its leadership role in open admissions, diversity, and multiculturalism, then it is incumbent upon administrators, faculty and students that we pay close attention to Dr. Sutherland's microcosmic findings. Our ability to deal with that educational deficit with appropriate policy applications at this level could set precedents for application at the national level.

A. J. Williams-Myers
Executive Director
20 November 1991

Institutional Responses to Students of African Descent Attending the State University of New York at Albany, the College at Oneonta and Hudson Valley Community College*

INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of this evaluation was to determine the institutional processes and mechanisms which are in place at the State University of New York at Albany, Oneonta and Hudson Valley Community College to deal with the concerns of undergraduate students of African descent. In that regard, structured interviews were conducted at these campuses with administrators, staff and faculty members to garner information on the nature of each institution's responses to the presence of Black students.

With respect to the assessment procedures, prior to our visits to the campuses, copies of our 1988 research findings on Black students' perceptions of these institutions were sent to campus personnel who had agreed to participate in this year's evaluation. The 1988 data dealt with the structural and social psychological factors which affected the campus experiences of students of African descent in the State University of New York system. The results were consistent with the longstanding findings of social scientists who have studied Black students on majority white campuses. It is a plausible argument that personnel on these campuses who play a role with students of African descent should be familiar with the historic concerns of students of color. Our 1988 findings were sent to prospective interviewers so as to provide the contextual basis for subsequent discussion.

* This research was made possible by a 1990 Summer Research Fellowship from The New York African American Institute.

At the interview sessions, campus personnel were asked to indicate what remedial strategies were being utilized to facilitate the academic achievements of students of African descent. It is essential to note that those persons interviewed played critical roles in the institution's relationship with Black students. Hence, the interview sessions allowed for extensive and in-depth discussion of various issues which impacted the academic existence of Black students on these campuses.

The interviews largely yielded descriptive information on the topic of interest. In addition, empirical findings were essentially absent on the outcomes associated with special intervention services and programs to retain and to positively impact the academic success of Black students. To illustrate, some campuses have instituted tutoring programs with the stated objective of assisting minority students to achieve their full academic performance levels in University courses. However, we were unaware of the institutions' efforts to evaluate the effectiveness and value of tutoring for minority students in general, and Black students in particular.

A complex conjunction of factors may account for the paucity of data on program outcomes. For one, many of the special programs and services were developed over the period of the last two to three years. Some interviewees argued that enough time had not elapsed to allow for meaningful analyses of program outcomes. It is also the case that the offices with primary responsibility for minority students are typically understaffed and lack other requisite resources to engage in evaluatory practices. As will be gleaned from this report, the small numbers of faculty and staff members of color on each campus are the chief agents attending to the needs of Black students. Several of these persons

indicated the extraordinary efforts expended to simply insure the administration of programs and services to students of color. They posited that personnel should be hired for program evaluations.

It is also instructive to indicate that academic institutions report that federal constraints disallow for any exclusive focus on one racial or ethnic student population. Consequently, as it relates to this evaluation, the word "minority" has become the catchword associated with strategies, programs and services for students of color, including students of African descent.

This evaluation has sought to present a comprehensive examination of the commitment of each academic institution to provide a favorable academic environment for students of African descent. We also thought it essential for this evaluation to highlight some of the salient expressed concerns of students of African descent attending the various campuses. In brief, this evaluation describes the supportive programs and services, academic interventions, retention strategies and several other measures at each institution for the academic growth and success of students of African descent.

State University of New York at Albany

Overview of Previous Findings on Students of African Descent Attending SUNY-Albany

The 1988 survey of Black students at the University of Albany revealed that 80% of the students reported experiencing academic problems and 76% of them expressed dissatisfaction with racial disharmony on the campus. While the latter statistic was disturbingly high, it nonetheless represented a decline from our 1986 study for the New York African American Institute which demonstrated that 85% of Black students were dissatisfied with the University's racial climate. We believe that several significant measures taken since 1986 by SUNY-Albany to remove racial hostility on campus may account for the above cited decrease, points to which we shall return. More pertinent to the present overview were the findings that a disproportionate number of students saw the need for more Black professionals, more cultural activities and more classroom discussion on cultural topics. Seventy-two percent of the students surveyed did not believe that the University was committed to Black students. The following discussion focuses on the programs and services which have been formulated to provide students of color with positive linkages with the University and to foster academically successful experiences for these undergraduate students.

Special Programs to Meet the Needs of Students of African Descent

Previous research findings have suggested that the presence of a critical mass of Black students on a predominantly white campus allows for feelings of belongingness and

improves the overall adjustment of these students. At the University at Albany, campus professionals use a variety of strategies to recruit students of color. Students of African descent have four avenues of admissions to the University. One avenue through which students can gain access to the University is through regular channels of admissions. Another avenue is through the Minority Recruitment Program (MRP), which was established in 1982 to reflect the University's commitment to increase the enrollment of students of color. This program admits those students who meet traditional academic admissions criteria but require additional financial assistance. In Fall 1990, MRP was responsible for the largest enrollment of Black students. A third avenue of admissions is the Talented Students Admissions Program (TSAP) which was established in the 1970s. Thirty academic departments, including athletics, music, art and the sciences, join together to recruit students who display talent in specific areas but fail to meet the regular admission standards. A fourth and final avenue is the Educational Opportunity Program, which affords admission opportunities for economically and educationally disadvantaged students.

In 1984, and as a way to further assist students of color, the University instituted the Douglas Scholarships. Ten of these awards are issued each academic year to incoming students of color who meet regular admission standards but require financial assistance to complete the undergraduate degree. This scholarship provides funding for four years.

Over the years, SUNY-Albany has shown incremental increases in its enrollment of students of African descent. **For instance, enrollments for Black students rose**

from 695 in Fall 1986 to 856 in 1988 to 986 in 1990. Data on the retention of these cohorts were not available at the time of writing this report. However, we have been informed that the retention rates of students of color have shown improvements over time. Yet, consistent with national trends, racial disparities persist in graduation rates. **In general, the retention rate for minority students ranges between 45-55%. In contrast, the white student population shows a 65-70% retention rate.**

Strategies developed by the University at Albany for the retention of students of color are interwoven in the following discussion.

Student Affairs Division

A Minority Student Services Office was established in 1987 to develop, coordinate and implement supportive services and programs for minority students. This Office oversees C-Step (Collegiate Science and Technology Entry Program), the Minority Student Academic Support Programs and the Office of Minority Student Development.

The primary objective of the Minority Student Services Academic Support Programs, is to ensure the retention and academic success of those students who have been admitted through the Minority Recruitment Program (MRP). To accomplish these goals, the Director had developed a network of faculty members who serve as liaisons for students of color, particularly at the departmental level. The program's objectives are for the student to have access to a faculty member who can assist him or her in negotiating the various realms of the academic environment and to foster academic excellence in the student.

The Minority Student Services Academic Support program works in coordination with C-Step and the Educational Opportunity Program to provide peer tutoring assistance to MRP students. In addition to these academic support services, in 1989 this Office started what has been characterized as a pilot program. The Director stated that the function of this program is "to promote the retention and wellness of students of African descent." Graduate students of color with majors in science, economics, business, math and statistics provide instructional services to small groups of MRP undergraduate students. The Director noted that the successes of this academic support service have led to an increase from two to five graduate student instructors to meet the demands of the participating undergraduate students.

In the Office of Minority Student Development, the Director serves as advisor to various cultural and political organizations such as Pan Caribbean, ASUBA, Pan-Hellenic Council and African American and Latino Student Advisory Board. This Office provides leadership training to students of color, and sponsors seminars, workshops and cultural events.

Some of the other programs sponsored by the Office of Minority Student Services include the Martin Luther King Black History Month Luncheon, a speakers series, supplemental summer orientations and the Minority Graduate Students Dinner. The office publishes a periodic newsletter called the Grapevine. This newsletter provides information on opportunities and issues of particular interest to students of color.

Minority Achievement and Academic Awards

The Minority Achievement Awards, also called the Spelman Awards was started in 1986. This award program is sponsored by the Office of Minority Student Services. The awards are given annually to students of color who have shown significant achievements in the areas of scholarship, leadership and community service. This office also started the Cronwell Scholarship in 1990. This annual memorial award is given to a student of color with outstanding achievements in the areas of music, theatre and science.

Division of Academic Affairs

This Division provides a range of supportive services and programs to the general student population. Administrators and staff members posited that students of color are consumers and recipients of these services and programs. We have no knowledge, however, of precise quantitative data which reflected the degree of Black students' involvement.

The Director of Academic Support Services estimated that in the 1989-1990 academic year approximately 150 students of color with academic difficulties took advantage of tutoring services. These services are provided in small study groups by graduate students who serve as facilitators. These facilitators deal with questions, promote discussion and identify problem solving strategies. In addition, each study group has two undergraduate honor students who offer individualized assistance to those students who seek special attention. According to the Director, students of African descent are increasingly serving as tutors. The Director pointed out that in the role of

tutoring students demonstrated an appreciable increase in self-esteem while strengthening better leadership and communication skills.

Each study group conducts a two hour weekly session over the course of a semester, with no more than ten persons assigned to each group. Study groups are available for 23 courses which fall within 10 subject areas: accounting, economics, chemistry, physics and computer science. We have reviewed evidence of administrators and staff members concerted efforts to encourage students of color to participate in these study groups. Indeed, Academic Support Services has updated an academic early warning system which informs students on their unsatisfactory academic performance in courses. This system is designed to alert students to academic support programs which are available to them. Academic warnings are communicated to the student before the deadline for course withdrawal.

We believe that the University must provide the necessary resources for empirical investigations on the efficacy and value of these programs. We further contend that such studies do not necessarily call for the utilization of financial resources in these times of budgetary constraints. The University at Albany considers itself a research institution, and its Office of Institutional Research, with competent and renowned researchers on its staff, is capable of evaluating program outcomes. For example, it would be useful to conduct empirical studies on the effects of tutoring on the grade point averages, continued enrollment and other criterion factors for tutored and non-tutored students, especially students of African descent. Another important research question is

to determine if the early academic warning system is succeeding in improving both the academic performance and retention rates of Black students.

Our concerns for the assessment of program outcomes are also relevant to the faculty mentoring program which was initiated at the University during the Spring semester of 1988. One premise of this program is that faculty members can serve as valuable resources to students. Faculty members who are involved in the program are encouraged to establish on-going contact with assigned students. Mentors have responsibility for assisting students to deal with academic, social, psychological and other issues which impact the academic existence of mentees. This program assigns three students who are on academic probation to a faculty mentor. As of Fall 1990, there were two hundred faculty mentors. We were also informed that approximately 40% of the mentees were actively involved with the program. One assumption of the program is that the faculty-student relationship will inspire the students to strive for improvements in their academic performance. **We posit that the University must begin to assess outcomes expected from this program.**

The University has recently approved several curricular revisions which emphasize cultural diversity. For example, in the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences undergraduate students are now required to complete a cultural diversity course as part of their degree requirements.

Multicultural Awareness Program

This program was started in 1987 and is sponsored by the Department of Residential Life. The program was initially called the Minority Assistance Program. We

were informed that students objected to the term "minority" and hence the name change in 1990 to the Multicultural Awareness Program.

The program was designed to provide incoming and upperclass African American, Native American, Asian and Latino students with opportunities to develop leadership, interpersonal and communication skills, to encourage unity among ethnic group members, and to foster positive interactions between students living in the residence halls. Another program objective was to improve the racial climate on campus.

Student volunteers from the aforementioned ethnic groups work with resident assistants and dorm residents to foster cultural awareness and sensitivity in the campus environment. Volunteers receive a small stipend. The Director indicated that volunteering allows for the development of leadership and communication skills in students. It was also her view that more racial tolerance has occurred as a function of the program.

The Presence of Professionals of African Descent

The University has not been very successful in increasing the number of faculty members of color. Indeed, as of Fall 1990, there were 669 full-time faculty members and only thirteen faculty members of color. As we indicated earlier, Black students have called for more professionals of African descent. Likewise, in the current evaluation, administrators and staff members advocated for an increase in these professionals who could serve as role models for Black students.

With more Black professionals on the predominately white campus, one might observe a decrease in the number of Black professionals who report that they have to over extend themselves to satisfy the demands of the campus community. **It is also**

important to indicate that seven of the ninety eight executive-administrative-managerial non-faculty positions are currently occupied primarily by Black males.

In 1990, the University hired its first Black President. The University has persistently stated its goal of increasing the representation of professionals of color, including women of African descent. These statements take on special significance in view of the increases in the enrollment of students of African descent.

Hudson Valley Community College

In 1988, we conducted a survey to determine the perceptions of Hudson Valley Community College held by students of African descent. In that study we found that 69% of the students felt that the campus was not committed to them and 90% of that sample believed that the campus needed more black professionals. The majority of students (86%) also contended that the college needed more cultural activities. A primary objective of the present evaluation was to examine the mechanisms in place at HVCC to address these and other concerns of students of African descent.

At the time of this evaluation, **Hudson Valley Community College had 242 full-time faculty members. There were four full-time and seven part-time Black faculty members. One tenured Black faculty member is on staff at HVCC.** We were informed that the office of Affirmative Action Officer has been vacant since 1989. We were unaware of the College's formal efforts to increase the number of faculty members of color.

There are 9,668 students enrolled at HVCC, of which about 420 are Black students. There are various admission tracks for Black students to enter HVCC. This College has an open-admissions policy. In addition, for the 1989-1990 academic year, Black students comprised 40% of the Educational Opportunity Program's (EOP) recruits. The Educational Opportunity Center (EOC), a state-funded pre-college program, is affiliated with the College and serves as a source from which HVCC obtains Black students. Approximately 2000 students enter HVCC from the EOC, of which 20% are of African descent. In 1989-1990, of the seventy-three students recruited through the athletics department, a third of them were of African descent.

Students who do not meet academic admissions criteria are typically required to take placement tests. Theses are purported to assess students' proficiency in writing, mathematics, science and reading. Failure to perform at acceptable standards results in the student being advised to take remedial courses in the first semester of their freshman year. Students who enter HVCC through EOC are exempted from these placement tests. While we were unable to get specific statistics, it is our understanding that a significant number of Black students are required to take these remedial courses. Academic departments have primary responsibility for administering remedial classes and determining developmental course load. These remedial courses consist of four non-credit hour courses. Students are required to show proficiency in math, introduction to biology, reasoning and reading before they are allowed to take credit hour courses. It is of importance to ascertain the financial, academic and personal effects on students of African descent who are required to take this non-credit hour developmental course

curriculum. One relevant question relates to how long it takes for these students to complete the degree requirements at HVCC.

During our visits to HVCC, we learned that Black students relied on the Learning Assistance Center for academic assistance. We ascertained that this center provides peer tutoring and academic services to students in reading/study skills, writing and mathematics.

Our previous research findings on students attending HVCC revealed that sixty-five percent (65%) of these students were experiencing financial problems. In the present evaluation we gathered that the absence of on-campus housing compounds the financial difficulties of Black students. Moreover, because of their inadequate financial resources, these students were reported to be subjected to more housing problems than white students. A faculty-student association has been seeking to remedy the housing problem. Several proposals such as the purchase of property have been discussed. No resolution is immediately in sight. Another financial strain on Black students is that the College does not have a meal plan.

We will now turn our attention to the specific programs and services which are in place to meet the needs of the students of African descent.

The Minority Mentoring Program

This program was established in 1988. Students who have agreed to enroll at HVCC are offered the opportunity to receive more personalized attention from faculty and staff mentors of African descent. Since its inception, approximately two hundred Black students have participated in this program. Students are required to meet with their

mentors on a monthly basis. This past academic year, mentees were exposed to workshops on career issues, college policies and financial aid. Students were also given achievement awards in recognition of their academic performance.

Those interviewed discussed the program's attempts to monitor the academic performance of mentees. **The mean grade point average of mentees was reported to be about 2.3.** This was said to compare favorably with the academic performance of the general student population. **A program assessment done in Spring 1990 showed that 30-40% of program participants transferred to four-year colleges.**

Staff members of African descent have volunteered their time to run this program. **It was suggested that a full time staff position should be created to oversee this program.**

The Minority Student Orientation Program

This program was started in June 1990 and is funded by the College. The program seeks to enhance the academic achievement skills of Black students from New York City and the Capital District area. The stated objectives of the program are: (a) to increase the enrollment of minority students at HVCC, (b) to provide information to students on the educational opportunities and other services available at the College and (c) to facilitate the retention and academic success of minority students. Students are invited to take advantage of program services. Fifty-four students have participated in this program since its inception.

The summer orientation programs are central to this orientation program. These summer programs offer incoming students of color information on admission procedures,

financial aid, counseling, tutoring services, housing and other academic and student-related activities.

During their tenure at HVCC, program participants attend workshops on time management and study skills. They also attend lectures delivered by motivational speakers. Counselling services are available to students. This program also offers math and writing labs. The Program Director assists students with scholarship, housing, and other student-related matters. According to the Director, parents of student participants have displayed enthusiastic responses to this program.

C-STEP

The Collegiate Science Technology Entry Program (C-STEP) was implemented at HVCC in 1987. The program is funded by the state and the College. In the 1989-1990 academic year, thirty-five Black students were enrolled in C-STEP. **Of the nine recent C-STEP graduates, seven have gone on to four-year colleges and universities.**

Program activities for the past academic year included tutorial sessions in math and writing, trips to colleges of higher education, motivational lectures and basic skills workshops. It is the general view that this program has impacted positively the retention of Black students. However, we did not see any statistical information which substantiated this claim.

Minority Outreach Program

This program is funded by a HVCC Continuing Education grant. The program has been in operation since 1988. One program objective is to attract persons who are 25 years or older to attend HVCC. Another goal is to provide personalized attention to these

students to aid their transition into the college environment and to facilitate their academic success at HVCC.

The Program Director engages in community outreach in the Capital District and surrounding areas. He visits community agencies, community events, parks and other sites where he can make contact with his population of interest. While the program appears to have enjoyed some success, statistics were not available on the number of students of African descent who have enrolled at the College as a result of this program.

College Wide Activities

During the past academic year, the college approved a course on cultural pluralism in American society. There are other diversity courses in the general curriculum. In addition, it is our understanding that faculty and staff members attended multicultural diversity workshops which were sponsored by the College.

In summary, it was the view of those interviewed that HVCC has adopted measures to facilitate the academic success of students of color and to create a favorable academic climate for these students. We perceived that staff members of color were the chief persons involved in these efforts. **It was suggested that greater campus-wide involvement was needed to address the concerns of students of African descent.**

State University of New York College at Oneonta

In their responses to the 1988 survey, 70% of the students of African descent indicated that this College was not committed to them. Ninety-one percent of the students reported a need for more Black professionals, 57% of the sample

perceived racial disharmony on this campus, and 58% of the students said that Black students were negatively stereotyped by white students. Seventy-six percent of the students reported experiencing academic difficulties. The present evaluation sought to examine the College's responses to the needs of Black students. Hence, we conducted interviews on the campus with the appropriate administrators, staff and faculty members.

The latest data furnished by the Affirmative Action Office at SUNY-Central indicated that this College has 268 full-time faculty members, of which seven are of African descent. Five of the Black faculty members hold joint appointments with the Black and Hispanic Studies Department and a traditional department. The College recently hired an Assistant to the President for Multicultural Affairs. This person serves as the Affirmative Action Officer and is purported to be engaged in aggressive recruitment efforts to increase the number of minority faculty on the campus. In conjunction, this individual is responsible for fostering a climate of diversity and addressing bias-related actions on the campus. Over the past academic year, workshops and conferences were held on discriminatory and diversity issues. Specifically, during the past academic year, at the August-September 1990 student orientation, incoming students were introduced to the concept of diversity. Similarly, invited speakers addressed diversity concerns during the academic orientation series and Black faculty members have made presentations to the College community on cultural topics. There is also ongoing discussion on making the curriculum more culturally relevant. **One proposal is to require undergraduates to take a three-hour credit course on cultural diversity.**

With respect to Black students, as of Fall 1989, there were 117 Black students in a population of 5,620 students. The majority of these Black students were from the New York City region. **We were informed that less than half of the incoming class of Black students graduate from College at Oneonta. At the time of this evaluation the College had no strategic approaches to deal with the high attrition rates for Black students.** In a related vein of thought, since the 1970s there has been a steady decline in the number of Black students attending this College. To illustrate, the figures for 1990 showed that 108 Black students were enrolled at this college, a decline from the 1989 data of 117 students. The decline in enrollment for the period cited is small but significant. **Indeed, the persistent slippage in Black student enrollments is of central importance in view of the vast literature which suggest that a critical mass of African American students is a key influence on Black students' persistence on predominantly white campuses.** The College is reported to have plans to double the number of minority students over the next five years. It should be noted that historically the Educational Opportunity Program recruited Black students. In 1990, the College assigned that task to the College's Admissions Office.

We gleaned from our visit to the campus that the College has not yet developed a coordinated and comprehensive approach in dealing with students of color. For example, consistent with our previous survey results, the present evaluation found that Black students were in need of more financial support. We were informed that it was not unusual for these students to be unable to purchase books. (Our earlier study indicated that students of African descent experienced difficulties in obtaining jobs in the Oneonta

area.) In this evaluation, interviewees indicated that students' financial difficulties were in part tied to the establishment and administration of local campus policies. These individuals recommended changes in financial aid to relieve the financial burdens of students.

Black students were reported to be culturally isolated and to experience other forms of alienation on this campus. Moreover, the off-campus environment has a majority white population and no Black community to speak of. Thus, Black students experience feelings of estrangement both from the campus environment and the larger social environment. **In general, students who decide to leave this campus cite both the lack of a sense of community and the paucity of culturally relevant programs. We were told that students also indicate racial bias as another reason for leaving the campus. Interviewees recommended that greater faculty-Black student interactions could help to relieve students' experienced isolation. They also expressed the need for the hiring of college personnel specifically charged to represent the interests of students of color.** We remind the reader of the efforts of SUNY-Albany and Hudson Valley Community College in these areas.

We pointed out earlier in this section that a substantial proportion of the Black students surveyed stated that they had experienced academic problems. **Currently, there does not appear to be any formal and programmatic approach in identifying and working with students of color who are academically at risk at this College.** It is our understanding that the EOP office had traditionally played a role in the provision of tutorial services to students with academic deficiencies. At the present time, the Learning

Center has a primary responsibility for providing academic support services to students. **However, from all indications there does not seem to be any focused attention on enhancing the academic performance and success of students of color.**

In a different stream of thought, several years ago Black students formed the Third World Association to address their cultural, social and political concerns. In 1969, Karibu, a cultural center, was assigned to the Association for its meetings and other activities. Karibu came to serve as a general meeting place for Black students. In the early 1980s, the President of the College decided that the cultural center's site was needed for other campus activities. In return, Black students were assigned to a trailer for their Association's purposes. The students are no longer using that trailer because it proved to be physically unsafe. We were told that since early 1980s Black students have repeatedly expressed their dissatisfaction with not having adequate accommodations for their Association's purposes and other activities.

In an associated stream of discussion, at several predominantly white academic institutions, the Blacks Studies Department offers a hospitable environment to Black faculty members and Black students. To complicate matters for Black students attending SUNY-Oneonta, the Black and Hispanic Studies Department has severe limitations of physical space. Currently, that department has office space only for the Chair and the department's secretary. **It appears then that Black students face various forms of quantitative and qualitative isolation on this campus.**

In summary, the College's early attempts at addressing cultural diversity have been directed primarily at the general campus community. Comprehensive and coordinated

focus on students of color has yet to be demonstrated. **Interviewees noted that the previous gains of staff and students of African descent continue to be eroded on this campus.** For instance, as we noted earlier, the College has shown a steady decline in Black student enrollments. There have also been declines in the number of Black professionals on the campus. **Unlike the past, there is no person of color in a policy making position on this campus at the time of writing this report.**

It is important to point out that over thirty-five years of research findings suggest that Black students are more likely to succeed on the majority white campus if they perceive that these institutions are committed to them. Our 1988 data revealed that a significant number of surveyed Black students did not hold such perceptions of the College at Oneonta. Moreover, this year's interviews with non-student personnel revealed that while this college has articulated its commitment to a culturally diverse academic environment, the academic and cultural needs of students of African descent required special and focused attention. It should be emphasized that the research literature indicated that remedial strategies including the development and implementation of special programs lead to positive outcomes in the Black student population. **Some key influences on Black students' academic performance, adjustment to, and persistence on the predominantly white campuses include intensive, and if necessary, intrusive academic assistance, faculty mentoring, peer tutoring and peer mentoring, improved financial aid packaging, sensitizing the campus community to students organizations and cultural events. Based on our findings, we have concluded that the College at Oneonta must implement**

fundamental changes for the academic growth and development of students of African descent.

CONCLUSION

We believe that, however imperfect, in the main, the campuses studied have sought since the late 1980s to create a more positive institutional fit for students of African descent. It was also patently clear from this evaluation that faculty and staff of color were designated to accomplish the institutions' objectives vis-a-vis students of African descent. **We believe that increased hiring and retention of professionals of African descent and greater campus wide involvement are necessary if we are to observe improvements in the intellectual life of students of African descent.**

Certainly, a related task is for these institutions to empirically demonstrate what strategies, programs and services are useful for predicting the academic achievements of Black students. We hope, further, that intensive, critical and large scale study of this student population becomes a priority for these institutions. The absence of these data shrouds our understanding of the essentials for academic excellence in students of African descent on the campuses of the State University of New York.